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SUBJECT: TURK-AZERI DIASPORA TAKES AIM AT ARMENIAN DIASPORA

REF: A. ANKARA 468

[B](#). ANKARA 159

[C](#). YEREVAN 149

Classified by Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner for  
Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#). (C) Summary: A recent Turkish-Azeri diasporas forum in Baku is seeking to develop an organized counterbalance to the influence of the Armenian diaspora worldwide. Possible Turkish-Armenian rapprochement looks bleak, although MFA sources tell us FM Gul plans to approach Secretary Rice with a positive move after Turkish parliamentary elections currently scheduled for November. End Summary.

[2](#). (U) According to Turkish MFA and press reports, 513 businessmen and prominent political and civil society leaders representing Turkish and Azeri diasporas from 48 countries participated in the inaugural Forum of World Azerbaijani and Turkish Diaspora Organizations on March 9 in Baku. Azeri President Aliyev and Turkish PM Erdogan gave opening speeches. Along with participants from Central Asia, Europe, North America, Russia and Iran, "TRNC President" Mehmet Ali Talat also attended.

[3](#). (C) Participants adopted three major resolutions: a "Joint Strategy on the Activities of the Azerbaijani and Turkish diaspora organizations," an "Appeal to the Turkic-speaking Peoples," and a broader "Baku Declaration." MFA Acting DDG for Caucasus and Central Asia Suleyman Gokce called the statements generic in nature and said organizers did not decide upon the timing and location of a second meeting.

[4](#). (C) Gokce told us that Turkey and Azerbaijan jointly came up with the Turk-Azeri diaspora idea one year ago. The Azeris then took the initiative to establish this forum for "dialogue and cooperation." Gokce asserted that the forum is not solely targeted at countering the Armenian diaspora's influence and is not intended to push the Armenian government into a corner. Gokce noted that it would also look at improving joint lobbying, holding common cultural events and establishing stronger business ties.

[5](#). (C) On prospects for Turkey-Armenia rapprochement in the near future, Gokce opined that even a symbolic gesture by Turkey towards Armenia at this point would not be enough for Armenian diaspora hardliners. He said FM Gul will approach Secretary Rice with a positive move, but not until after the

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Turkish parliamentary elections currently scheduled for November 4. He called Armenian FM Oskanian "intransigent and unhelpful" vis--vis Turkey, particularly as Armenia's May 12 elections approach and Oskanian must position himself accordingly. Gokce raised concerns about recent changes in Armenian law that he said increased the influence and power of the Armenian diaspora in GOAM politics.

¶6. (C) While in Baku, PM Erdogan also visited Sangachal terminal (the starting point of the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline), inaugurated the new Turkish Embassy with President Aliyev and visited two Turkish schools. The Turkish Ambassador also organized a 300-person working lunch between the Turkish and Azeri delegations. Gokce said Erdogan and Aliyev met one-on-one but he had no details on what was discussed.

¶7. (C) Comment: The timing of this forum comes ahead of the April 24 Armenian Remembrance Day and the possibility Congress could pass an Armenian genocide resolution soon. Although Gokce took pains to emphasize that the forum was not only targeted at countering the Armenian diaspora's influence, the forum's aim is clear: both the Turks and Azeris want to beat the powerful Armenian diaspora organizations at their own game. The evidence indicates they have a long way to go. End Comment.

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